

Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee
March 9, 2009
SENATE BILL NO. 830 AN ACT CONCERNING THE
GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING EDUCATION

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleishmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Swetha Ballyamanda. I am a senior at the University of Connecticut and a 2005 graduate of CREC's Metropolitan Learning Center Interdistrict Magnet School. Accompanying me today is Executive Director of CREC, Bruce Douglas, and General Director of CREC Magnet Schools, Denise Gallucci.

It has come to my attention that the governor has not included the Commissioner of Education's proposal for the state to assume full funding of magnet school programs. I urge you to fund these schools as the Commissioner outlined. These are exceptional schools that provide students unique opportunities and make a profound and lasting impact. MLC has been recognized with many national awards due to the special programming that speaks to the child's interest. In November, the United States Department of Education included MLC in their publication as one of the eight most successful magnet programs in the country. Without the full funding support of the state, MLC and the other magnet schools will have to make significant cuts to the very programs that make the school outstanding. They will not be able to personalize learning to the degree needed to help children as they have in the past, they will not be able to provide unique programming and they will not be able to link a child's interest with rigorous study of that interest. This school went from a start up in 1998 to national recognition in ten years because of your support and the support of the local communities. This support must continue. Our state continues to look at high school reform and how to make high school more engaging.

I was a member of the first graduating class from MLC; we had many students who succeeded from my class because of the hard work of my teachers. Each year I was at MLC and since I have left, I continue to read about the constant struggles the towns and the state has in funding magnet schools. The commissioner's proposal addresses those issues.

There are a few of my peers who could not be here today to testify, Alex Stegmaier of Windsor Locks, Connecticut graduated with me from MLC. He is now a senior at George Washington University. While at MLC he had the opportunity to travel, teleconference with students throughout the world on important issues, host international students in his home, become proficient in a second language and do all of this in a rich and diverse setting. Alex, many of my peers, and I believe that we could not have been successful without the help of MLC and CREC. We would like to thank all of our town's and our legislature for past support. We encourage you to keep these opportunities open for other students.

The lack of funding for our education is a lack of support towards our future. Education is what we need to invest in. If we do not educate our future properly with the adequate amount of funding that is highly necessary for MLC and many other magnet schools to operate, we will not flourish. In order to become a successful state in our nation, where poor and non-poor students are given the equal opportunity to learn in a diverse environment, we will need full state funding for these schools.

Thank You.